

1983 CRIME VICTIMS SURVEY

Introduction

Between March and May 1975 the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey on crime victimisation as part of the General Social Survey of households and persons. Results from the survey were published in *General Social Survey, Crime Victims, May 1975* (ABS Catalogue No. 4105.0—now out of print). Summary results were published in the 1980 Year Book.

During the period February 1983 to January 1984, the ABS conducted the 1983 Crime Victims Survey throughout Australia to obtain information about incidents of selected crime offences of which households and individuals had been the victim in the twelve months preceding the date of the interview. The term "incident" refers to one occurrence of a particular offence. The Survey covered 18,000 households and 37,000 persons.

Details were obtained about the last incidents of victimisations recorded for break and enter and household property theft (which were regarded as household offences), and for motor vehicle theft, robbery, other theft, sexual assault and assault (which were regarded as personal offences).

Main purposes

The main purposes of the survey were to:

- provide a measure of selected types of crime against private individuals and households;
- obtain information about victims;
- identify high risk potential victims;
- assess the extent of reporting of crime to the police; and
- provide information on reasons for reporting or not reporting crimes to the police.

Methodology

Trained interviewers conducted personal interviews with all members of the selected households aged 15 years and over in respect of the selected personal offences. Information about sexual assault was obtained only from female members of the household aged 18 years and over. Additionally, one adult member of each household was asked to provide information about offences against household property, including break and enter.

Data collected

Data was collected covering a wide range of topics relevant to aspects of victimisations. These included the circumstances of each type of crime to determine the seriousness, injury and loss, the location and time of particular incidents, the known characteristics of the offender, whether the matter was reported to the police and the reasons why it was or was not reported.

Importance of the survey

The Crime Victims Survey is valuable as an alternative source of measures of crime to that available from official administrative statistics on crime—particularly that crime which is not reported to the police and which can only be investigated by a household survey. The reasons why particular offences are not reported to the police can highlight areas in police or judicial procedures which may require improvement. Additionally, the survey methodology provides personal data on victims and the circumstances of their victimisation which are not usually available from administrative statistics.

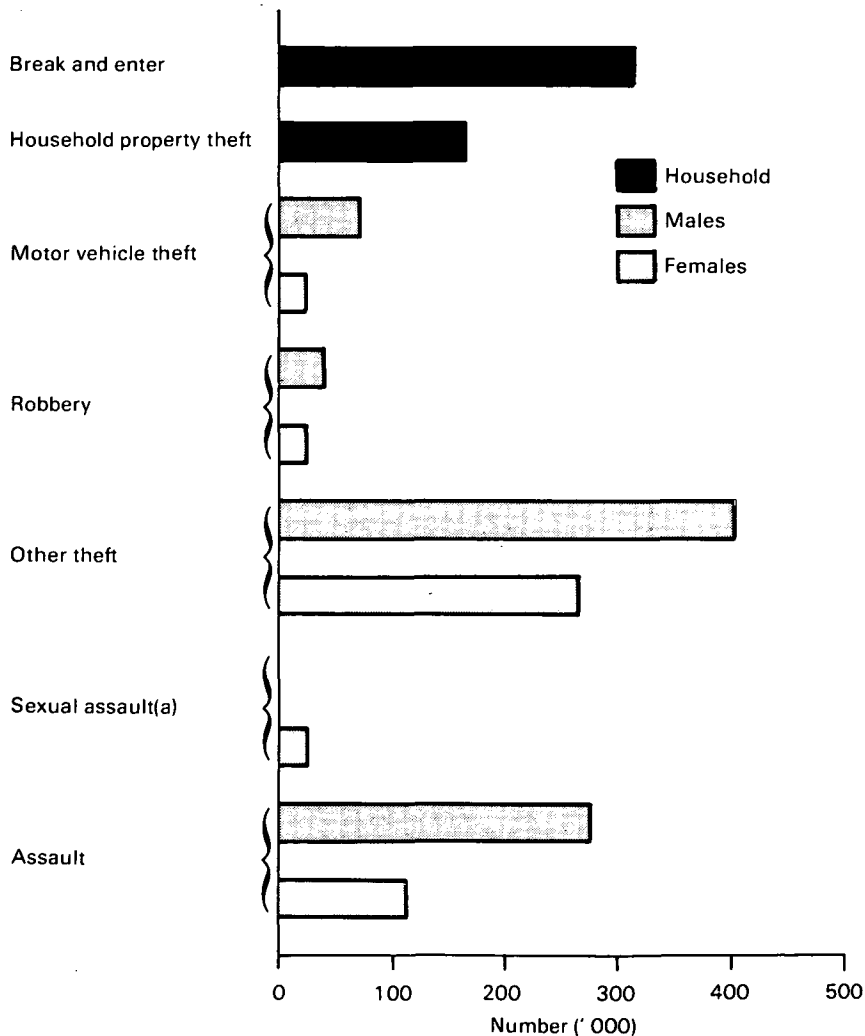
The major users of the data are the Australian Law Reform Commission, the Australian Institute of Criminology, the relevant State Government Departments and Authorities, Commonwealth Legal Aid Commission, the Australian Federal Police, State Police Departments and various academic and research organisations. Victim support schemes and State welfare agencies also require information on victims and the consequences of victimisation.

Main results

The Survey estimates that in the twelve months prior to interview, 89 per thousand households in Australia experienced a household crime and 98 per thousand persons suffered

a personal crime. The number of persons who were victims of each type of personal offence and the number of households who were victims of either household offences are shown in Plate XX. Each household or person is counted once only for each offence regardless of the number of incidents recorded for each offence. In the total victims count, each victim is counted once only regardless of how many offences he/she or the household recorded.

NUMBER OF VICTIMS OF SELECTED OFFENCES FOR HOUSEHOLD VICTIMS AND BY SEX OF VICTIM FOR PERSONAL OFFENCES



(a) Questions on sexual assault were asked only of females aged 18 years and over.

PLATE 33

Personal victims

The lowest victimisation rate (57 victims per thousand of the population aged fifteen years and over) was recorded for incidents occurring in Tasmania. The highest rate (135 victims per thousand of the population) was recorded for Northern Territory incidents.

Victims in the 15-19 and 20-24 age ranges showed the highest victimisation rates of all age groups. In general, victimisation rates declined steadily as age group increased.

Nearly twice as many males as females reported having been a victim of an offence (63 per cent of all personal victims were male). Never married, separated and divorced males and separated females were the most victimised groups while married and widowed females recorded the lowest victimisation rate.

People born in New Zealand recorded being victimised at almost twice the rate of everyone included in the survey. People born in Italy recorded being a victim least frequently.

The unemployed reported being victimised twice as often as the average person. People 'not in the labour force' were only 60% as likely to be victimised as the average person.

Victims of crimes involving violence or threatened violence were much more likely to have been victimised on more than one occasion than were victims of crimes not involving violence. 41 per cent of victims of assault, 38 per cent of victims of robbery and 40 per cent of victims of sexual assault reported that they had been a victim of that offence two or more times in the preceding twelve months.

For offences involving violence or threatened violence, the offenders were more likely to be male than female: almost nine out of ten victims were threatened or attacked by one or more male offenders and, of the remainder, one in three were attacked by both male and female offenders.

Males not in the labour force were the least likely of all employment status groups to report crimes while employed males were the most likely. Of all employment status groups, unemployed females were the most likely to state that "police couldn't or wouldn't do anything about it" as a main reason for not reporting the last incident.

Theft victims

Victims of theft, including the household offences of break and enter and household property theft, recorded that no property was recovered in 88 per cent of incidents in which property was stolen. Where cash was stolen, 70 per cent involved amounts of less than \$100. Only 4 per cent of recorded incidents of stolen cash involved amounts greater than \$500.

All crime victims

Whether the police were notified of the offence depended on its nature—94 per cent of motor vehicle thefts, 69 per cent of break and enters and 25 per cent of sexual assaults (this category is more extensive than rape or attempted rape) were reported to the police. For details on all offences see the first table.

One out of two victims (49%) reported at least one incident to the police and 56 per cent did not report one or more incidents. (These figures do not total to 100% because some victims with more than one recorded incident informed the police of at least one, but not of another). Of those victims not reporting one or more incidents, half the incidents were not reported mainly because the offence was considered "too trivial or unimportant". The most frequently recorded main reason for telling the police was "to try or hoped to get property back". The percentage distribution of the main reason for notifying and not notifying the police are given in the second table.

For victims of violence or threatened violence, the main reason recorded was "to try to stop it happening again".

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS AND WHETHER REPORTED TO POLICE

	Number of incidents	Reported to police		Not stated
		Yes	No	
	('000)	%	%	%
Break and enter	315.4	68.6	30.6	0.8
Household property theft	166.5	36.9	63.1	..
Motor vehicle theft	95.2	94.1	5.9	..
Robbery	65.3	42.6	57.4	..
Other theft	673.3	38.4	61.6	..
Sexual assault(a)	26.7	24.7	71.6	3.8
Assault	390.9	33.6	66.4	..

(a) asked only of females aged 18 years and over.

MAIN REASON GIVEN FOR NOTIFYING AND NOT NOTIFYING THE POLICE OF EACH LAST INCIDENT

	Per cent
why police told	
To try/hoped to get property back	15.4
Because crime committed/moral obligation	11.2
Because it was one of a number of incidents/to try to stop it happening again	5.3
Because of insurance/compensation	3.6
Wanted offender caught/punished	2.9
Fear of harm to self or another person	1.7
Other	2.2
Subtotal (a): incidents reported by any household member	41.0
Incidents reported to police but not by any household member	9.0
Subtotal (a): police aware of incident	49.4
why police not told	
Too trivial/unimportant	28.6
Police couldn't or wouldn't do anything about it	11.6
Private matter/would take care of it themselves	6.6
Told someone else instead	3.0
Afraid of reprisal	1.1
Offender thought/known to be a child	0.8
Too confused/upset/injured	0.7
Did not want offender punished	0.6
Because someone else did	(b)0.1
Other	7.0
Subtotal (a): police not aware of incident	56.3
Total (a)	100.0

(a) Totals may be less than the sum of the components since persons could have been victims of more than one offence, have taken different actions and/or have recorded different reasons for their actions. (b) This figure is subject to high standard error and is therefore unreliable

Detailed results

Further information is contained in two ABS publications; Victims of Crime, Australia, 1983, Summary (Cat. No. 4506.0) and Crime Victims Survey, Australia, 1983, Preliminary (Cat. No. 4505.0).